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ABSTRACT

This document, which is intended for employers, explains the benefits of and strategies for using school records in making hiring decisions. The document begins with a discussion of the benefits reaped by employers, students, and parents when employers use school records. Discussed next are the objectives and potential benefits of the Making Academics Count campaign, which is a national grassroots campaign aimed at increasing the number of employers asking job applicants for school records. Key questions for employers to consider before asking job applicants for school records are answered. The remainder of the document is devoted to the following ways employers can use school transcripts: asking job applicants for transcripts and/or other school records (and thereby sending a strong message that academics are important); building into the process (using transcripts as one part of an integrated selection process that takes many types of information into account and does not construct barriers to employment); and connecting to the job (analyzing the particular job to be filled, identifying the specific knowledge and skills/abilities needed to perform the job successfully, and using school records to determine if candidates possess the necessary knowledge, skills, and abilities). (MN)

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MAKING ACADEMICS COUNT

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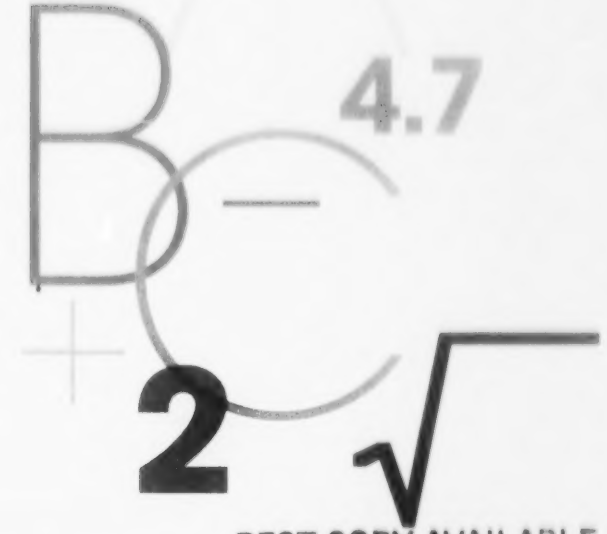
HIRING SMART:

AN EMPLOYER'S GUIDE TO USING SCHOOL RECORDS



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AT-A-GLANCE: STRATEGIES FOR USING SCHOOL RECORDS IN THE HIRING PROCESS

STRATEGY	WHAT IT MEANS	BENEFITS	KEEP IN MIND	COMPANIES IN ACTION
A: ASK **Pages 7-10**	**Employers ask** for school records as part of application process. May ask and not use the record in the hiring decision. Use to review attendance and disciplinary records.	• Students learn that school performance is important to employers. • Poor school attendance may be a predictor of poor work attendance. • History of misconduct or disciplinary problems while in school could indicate whether an applicant is well suited for employer's workforce.	• Employers must have **record keeping** systems preventing decision-makers access to irrelevant information. • Avoid setting rigid attendance cutoffs for **extensive absences** (there may be good reasons). • Check **state laws** on using disciplinary records.	• AJF Enterprises, McDonald's franchisee • Claymont Servistar Hardware & Supply • Partnership for Kentucky Schools
B: BUILD into the PROCESS **Pages 11-14**	Employers **consider** data on the school record as one equal part of a selection process. Employers do not identify any one "make or break" criteria.	Employers report: • lower failure rate for entry-level workers. • entry-level workers require less skill-remediation training. Schools say: • greater numbers of students enroll in higher level math and science classes.	• Student Record is given **equal consideration** as other components of the hiring process. • Avoid **unlawful discrimination** of groups of people. • This strategy has **not been challenged** in court.	• UNUM Corporation • Eastman Chemical Company • *SMART Grad* Program, Las Vegas Chamber of Commerce
C: CONNECT to the JOB **Pages 15-18**	Employers **use** information on the school record to determine if applicants have the specific **knowledge**, skills and abilities needed to successfully perform that job.	• Identify the skills to do the job. This information can be used in other H.R. functions, such as job descriptions, assessing training needs, job design, etc. • Create a screening tool that ensures access to a pool of employees better equipped for your workforce.	• This strategy is legal if there is **no disparate impact** OR the information has been validated in accordance with the law. • **Subjective criteria** also must be validated. • Employers validating should consult appropriate testing and measurement professionals as **well as legal** counsel for **specific advice.**	• IBM • BellSouth Corporation

YOUR COMPANY'S BOTTOM LINE — READ ON...

Employers care about improving student achievement —we have to. Our economy is changing. The workplaces of today—and tomorrow—demand ever-higher skill levels. Every CEO and human resource director understands the value of an educated and skilled workforce. Survey after survey highlights businesses' inability to hire skilled labor as the primary constraint to growth. On the positive side, research also indicates that an increase in the education level of a company's workforce on average by one year boosts productivity by 8.6% in manufacturing sectors and 12.9% in nonmanufacturing sectors. *(Source: Lisa Lynch and Sandra Black (using data from the National Center for the Educational Quality of the Workforce employer survey)*

FACTS & FIGURES

The minimum basic skills employers look for in prospective *entry*-level workers:

- ninth-grade (or higher) reading ability
- ninth-grade math proficiency
- problem-solving ability
- written and oral communication skills
- the ability to work with people from different backgrounds
- a basic familiarity with computers

Source: Richard Murnane and Frank Levy, *Teaching the New Basic Skills*, 1997

In this competitive "make or buy" labor market, business is continuously searching for ways to increase the skills of the current and future workforce. One way every employer can improve the quality of its workforce is to ask for school records as part of the hiring process.

Employers can help forge stronger links between academic achievement and workplace success by asking for school records — and by doing so, they stand to gain valuable information about prospective employees, leading to more efficient and effective hiring decisions. Employers that have asked for school records from job applicants report that the failure rate of their entry-level employees has declined, and new employees have required less remedial training.

Students benefit too. When they know that companies want workers who can read and write well, solve problems and reason — and that employers expect proof of these skills — they work harder and achieve more in school. Enrollment in higher level math and science classes increases, and employers gain access to a greater number of skilled, capable workers.

Educators and parents also support the idea of employers asking to see school records. From the earliest grades, students must understand that school

counts so that they make informed decisions about academic course selections and other experiences which ensure doors of opportunity continue to be open for them. Students who are not competing for admission to college may lack incentives to excel — but employers who ask for students' school records back up educators and parents by sending the message that *all* students must be challenged to study, learn and succeed.

FACTS & FIGURES

In a recent survey by *Public Agenda*, 50 percent of high school students said school would be more meaningful if they knew that employers would more closely scrutinize their academic records.

Source: *Getting By: What American Teenagers Really Think About Their Schools*, Public Agenda, 1996

FACTS & FIGURES

School records are transcripts, portfolios or any other record of student effort, attendance and accomplishment in school. In some communities, employers and educators are working together to develop user-friendly alternatives to the transcript that more succinctly convey information about student achievement as well as extracurricular and work experiences.

Employers sometimes question the usefulness as well as the legality of using school records. This guide addresses those concerns. In addition to providing information for human resources and legal professionals on the use of school records, this guide also highlights how specific companies have incorporated school records successfully into their hiring processes.

These examples demonstrate there is no one-size-fits-all approach. Some employers merely ask for school transcripts from job applicants; some use only general information found in transcripts; and others take a more in-depth approach that may require detailed legal justification. More detailed approaches to using school records in making hiring decisions can provide significant benefits to employers who want to make the investment, but each strategy has distinct benefits.

FACTS & FIGURES

Transcripts tell the story:

A survey of non-manufacturing firms found that companies which use transcripts and grades when making hiring decisions report higher productivity than those that do not use school records in hiring.

Source: Lisa Lynch and Sandra Black (using data from the National Center for the Educational Quality of the Workforce employer survey)

MAKING ACADEMICS COUNT CAMPAIGN

Over the past decade, business leaders have supported student achievement in many ways: mobilizing political support for state and national education reform legislation; serving on state and local academic standards-setting committees; implementing skill standards in the workplace; supporting educators through leadership and other professional development training; and providing opportunities for students and teachers to experience the world of work firsthand. Businesses of all sizes and in all industries continue to increase their commitment to education through all of these approaches. But today, many companies are going even farther, changing their own corporate practices to recognize and support student achievement.

Following the 1996 National Education Summit (a gathering of about 130 governors, CEOs, leading educators and policymakers), three business organizations — The Business Roundtable (BRT), the National Alliance of Business (NAB) and the U.S. Chamber of Commerce — developed a common agenda to support improved student achievement through three specific corporate practices.

- Align corporate philanthropy to support academic performance.
- Consider a community's commitment to education in making plant location decisions.
- *Implement hiring practices that will require applicants to demonstrate academic achievement through school-based records, such as academic transcripts, portfolios, certificates of initial mastery, or others as appropriate.*

In response to educators' and parents' concerns that school and work be more closely linked, BRT, NAB and the U.S. Chamber are working with the Business Coalition for Education Reform (BCER) (see box below) on a national grassroots campaign, *Making Academics Count*, which aims to increase the number of employers asking job applicants for school records. Throughout this

THE BUSINESS COALITION FOR EDUCATION REFORM (BCER)

The Business Coalition for Education Reform is made up of 13 national business-led organizations that coordinate their efforts to increase the academic achievement of all students by promoting business involvement in education at the national, state and local levels. To do so, the partners leverage resources and expertise; build partnerships to help states and communities learn from each other's experiences; and provide technical assistance to a growing network of 350 state and local business coalitions.

campaign, NAB will develop tools and resources to help companies and communities reinforce the importance of academic achievement to workplace success. This guide is the first such tool.

FOR MORE INFORMATION...

On the Making Academics Count Campaign:

Please contact the National Alliance of Business (which manages the Business Coalition for Education Reform) at (800) 787-2848. For more information on specific programs and company practices discussed in this guide, including primary documents, visit the *Making Academics Count* area on the Business Coalition for Education Reform Web site at **www.bcer.org.**

On Legal Issues:

This guide does not purport to offer specific legal or technical advice, nor should it be taken as such. Under federal employment law it is legal to ask applicants for school records; however, state laws vary. Companies contemplating using school records in hiring should consult legal counsel and other appropriate professionals for specific advice.

At the request of The Business Roundtable and the National Alliance of Business, *An Employer's Guide to Using School Records in Hiring Decisions* was prepared by the Equal Employment Advisory Council (EEAC), a nonprofit association established in 1976 to promote sensible approaches to the elimination of employment discrimination. Comprised of approximately 300 blue chip companies, EEAC is staffed by lawyers and HR professionals with specialized knowledge of and expertise in dealing with EEO-related legal, policy and compliance issues. The *Employer's Guide* provides a comprehensive review of the case law and related literature shaping the potential uses of school records. You may download this text from the Business Coalition for Education Reform Web site at www.bcer.org (under the *Making Academics Count* section). The EEAC may be contacted at www.EEAC.org.

For further information on the Equal Employment Opportunities Commission and the guidelines on hiring, please consult the EEOC homepage at www.EEOC.gov.

BEFORE YOU BEGIN

Like many other sources of information that employers use every day to make hiring decisions, school records can provide valuable information about potential job candidates. School records should be treated like any other type of hiring tool. And like other types of selection devices, the use of school records must be used consistently and in accordance with civil rights laws.

STRATEGY A: ASK

Employers send a strong message to students that academics are important merely by requiring applicants to submit (or to authorize the employer to obtain) transcripts and/or other school records as part of the regular application process.

STRATEGY B: BUILD INTO THE PROCESS

Employers not only require applicants to submit (or authorize the employer to obtain) transcripts; they use this data as one part of an integrated selection process that takes into account many types of information and does not construct barriers to employment or overall disparate impact. (See Glossary for a definition of "disparate impact" and "disparate treatment.")

STRATEGY C: CONNECT TO THE JOB

Employers analyze the particular job they need to fill. Then they identify the specific knowledge, skills and abilities needed to successfully perform that job. Finally, they use school records to determine if candidates possess the necessary knowledge, skills and abilities. (See page 15 and the Glossary for more information.)

KEY QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER

What kinds of records will you require?

Will your organization require a transcript or some other record? Which particular items from a school record will you look at (grades, attendance, course requirements)? Is the existing format of school records informative and easy to use, or should your organization work with educators and other community leaders to create more helpful school records? (See sidebar on page 8 for examples of how organizations have worked with educators to create better school records.)

From which applicants and for what jobs will you require school records?

Will the requirement apply to all applicants at every job level? Or just all entry-level job applicants? Some organizations only require transcripts from applicants who attended high school within a certain time period, for example, the last five years. Your organization's guidelines should be clear, specific and consistently applied.

Who will be responsible for obtaining or supplying the records?

Some organizations have applicants sign consent forms which authorize schools to release records directly to the employer. Others ask students to provide the records. In either case, parental consent is required before an employer can look at records for students who are under 18.

Who will be responsible for collecting and screening school records?

You may want to consider having a specific office or person collect records and remove irrelevant information (such as information about race, disabilities or graduation dates) from school records before they are reviewed by the staff members who make initial screening and hiring decisions.

Where will records be kept?

School records should be treated as a component of an application, and should be kept in the manner and for the time periods that employers are required to keep other records regarding job candidates and employees under applicable laws. In addition, employers should keep in mind the legal restrictions under federal law on disclosure of school records, and make sure that access to these files is restricted.

How will you let schools and the community know about these new hiring practices?

Once your organization decides to use school records in hiring, develop a strategy to make sure the message reaches educators, students and the entire community. Consider working with schools in the area from which your workforce is drawn, possibly as part of your affirmative action outreach program, to develop employment opportunities for students.

How will you deal with applicants who do not supply the requested records?

Employers may not want to turn away job applicants if their failure to submit a transcript is beyond their control. However, bear in mind that if your organization makes exceptions, it could lead to claims that applicants were treated differently on some illegal basis (such as race, sex, national origin, religion, disability or age).

STRATEGIES FOR USING SCHOOL RECORDS

STRATEGY A: ASK

As part of the regular application process, employers request applicants to submit (or to authorize the employer to obtain) transcripts and/or other school records. By setting the expectation that student records will be asked for, employers support the message that "school counts," even if they are not yet ready to actually use all of the information on the records when making hiring decisions.

WHAT IT MEANS

Asking for school records is legal under federal employment law. Employers may ask for records and for legal or administrative reasons may choose not to use them. The message sent to students will be more credible, however, if employers do use the school records after asking for them. Employers may opt to review two relatively simple items on school records as part of existing hiring procedures.

- Attendance records: Follow up on possible problems in an interview. When reviewing attendance records, employers should be sensitive to, and comply with, federal laws governing absences. Please consult the EEOC for specific information about appropriate and inappropriate attendance questions.
- Disciplinary records: Follow up on possible problems in an interview.

BENEFITS

- Students learn that school performance is important to employers. In time, employers might want to consider making use of the valuable information included on the record. Initially, however, asking for student records will raise expectations for all students.
- School attendance problems can be a predictor of poor work attendance.
- A history of misconduct or disciplinary problems while in school could indicate whether an applicant is well suited for the employer's workforce. However, if the job requirements are "unvalidated" (see page 19 and the Glossary for more information about validation), the employer may only consider information about behavior after candidates are selected for interviews.

KEEP IN MIND

- **Record Keeping:** If your organization chooses to ask for but not use school records in hiring, staff members who participate in screening or hiring employees should not look at them. You must have a fail-safe method to ensure that these staff members do not have access to these records.

- **Extensive Absences:** Employers using school records as a basis for questioning job applicants on attendance should be sensitive to the reasons behind extensive absences. If you ask about absences in an interview, you are less likely to mistakenly pass over an applicant whose school absences were caused by extreme circumstances, such as family obligations, illness or work. Avoid setting rigid attendance cutoffs in assessing applicants.

  If the absences are related to illness, the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC) has set out guidelines for employers when interviewing applicants. These can be found in *Guidance of Pre-Employment Disability Questions*. (See page 4 for information about where to find this guide.)

- **State Law:** Some states limit an employer's ability to obtain or use information about an applicant's disciplinary records. Check state laws before asking for or using such information.

MAKE IT MEANINGFUL

High school transcripts usually contain valuable information about a student's attendance, behavior, academic coursework and grades — but many employers believe transcripts are not as helpful in the hiring process as they could be. The problem, employers say, is that transcripts often do not convey useful information about a student's skills, abilities and experiences, such as internships or school-to-work activities. Moreover, because academic standards and assessments differ from school to school, employers feel grades do not provide a consistent comparison of these skills and abilities. In response to this problem, employers and educators, such as those described below, are beginning to work together to develop school records that convey more objective, useful information about student performance.

KENTUCKY

The business community in Nelson County, KY, pledged to use transcripts in hiring if these records were more useful. Local educators rose to the challenge by working together to standardize definitions of grades. Now an "A" in English at a city school means the same thing as an "A" in English at suburban and rural schools. School districts also give employers information about how letter grades translate into specific skills. As a result, more area employers are using transcripts in their hiring processes. For more information, contact Susan Vaughn of Nelson County Schools at (502) 349-7000.

VITAL LINK ORANGE COUNTY

In Orange County, Calif., Vital Link — a program initiated by the American Business Conference that aims to match high school students' education with the needs of employers — has developed an "employability transcript." This document records students' achievements and aptitude in skills that business leaders have identified as necessary for successful employment — ranging from problem-solving ability to how to produce spreadsheets. Employers access these records through an electronic database. Vital Link also has designed a professional development program to assure consistent measurement and career skills. For more information, contact Allen Goody, Vital Link-Orange County, 18012 Mitchell Avenue, Irvine, CA 92614; (714) 833-9003.

COMPANIES IN ACTION

AJF Enterprises, McDonald's franchisee

Andy Francis, owner and CEO of AJF Enterprises, has been helping build bridges between the classroom and the workplace for years. How? To fulfill a promise to local schools, Francis requests report cards from the young people who apply for jobs at any of the seven McDonald's restaurants AJF operates.

As part of the interview for a McDonald's job, applicants who are still in high school are asked about their attendance and tardiness records. To verify their answers, the interviewer asks the applicant to supply his or her most recent report card. Supplying the document is voluntary.

"Students' attendance and attitudes at school often transfer to the workplace," believes Francis. "And young people get the message before they graduate — when they still have the opportunity to modify or improve their behavior and attitude — that employers value behavior such as good attendance."

For more information, please contact Andy Francis, AJF Enterprises, (317) 595-7367.

Claymont Servistar Hardware & Supply

Claymont Servistar is one of 350 Delaware businesses that participate in the *HIRE Education* partnership. The partnership was formed in 1994 by educators and business leaders to encourage the use of high school transcripts in the hiring process. *HIRE Education* equips schools with fax machines, making it easy for them to supply employers with applicants' academic records.

Several of Claymont Servistar's 18 employees are part-time cashiers who are still in school, and the store requires applicants for these entry-level positions to provide a high school transcript. During interviews, the president of Claymont Servistar, Vernalee Frey, gives applicants a one-page transcript release form that *HIRE Education* has developed (if applicants are under 18 years old, this form must be signed by a parent or guardian). Once the form is signed and returned to her, Frey faxes the form to the applicant's high school, which in turn faxes the transcript to her within 48 hours.

Frey looks at attendance and tardiness. While she reviews other information in addition to transcripts, Claymont Servistar does not consider entry-level applicants who do not provide a transcript. These records are kept in the employee's personnel file. As part of the *HIRE Education* agreement, employers keep these records confidential.

Because most cashier applicants are under 18 and the transcript release forms require a parent's signature, Frey believes parents too are getting the message that school performance is directly linked to workplace success. "As far as I am concerned, *Hire Education* is the best tool yet for a small business. It is a cost-free way to obtain valuable information."

For more information, please contact Dr. Douglas Hill, *HIRE Education*, (302) 831-3101.

The Partnership for Kentucky Schools

The Partnership for Kentucky Schools has developed a new program designed to connect Kentucky businesses with the academic achievement of high school students. *Learning Equals Earning* was developed by the Partnership at the request of Governor Paul Patton and in collaboration with the State Department of Education and the Kentucky Chamber of Commerce. As part of the voluntary program, Kentucky employers agree to request the academic records of entry-level job applicants, sending the message to students and parents that school work is important to a job applicant's employment prospects.

At a press conference announcing the program, the governor called on Kentucky employers to begin asking for high school records such as transcripts, portfolios, attendance records, and summaries of extracurricular activities. The Department of Education has worked with local school districts to develop records that will be easily understood by employers.

In support of *Learning Equals Earning*, a growing number of employer-based organizations such as the Kentucky Chamber of Commerce, the Kentucky Retail Federation, the Associated General Contractors of Kentucky, and a number of local chambers, have passed resolutions asking their members to request entry-level job applicants to provide evidence of academic achievement. The Partnership's goal is to have 200 employers signed on by the end of 1998.

The Partnership has also published a document entitled "Ready for Work: Essential Skills for Kentucky Jobs." Based on published research, surveys, and personal interviews, this document addresses two basic questions: What skills do Kentucky businesses consider essential for new employees? What makes an individual—especially a recent high school graduate—an attractive candidate for employment? This report is being widely distributed throughout the state and will serve as a center of discussion among school leaders, students, parents, and business leaders in local communities.

For more information, please contact Carolyn Jones at the Partnership for Kentucky Schools, (606) 233-9849.

STRATEGY B: BUILD INTO THE PROCESS

Employers not only require applicants to submit (or authorize the employer to obtain) transcripts; they use this data as one part of a selection process that takes into account many types of information and that has no overall disparate impact. (See the Glossary for a definition of "disparate impact.")

WHAT IT MEANS

Employers consider data on the school record along with a number of other factors, such as prior experience, references and the outcome of a face-to-face interview. There is no particular element that "makes or breaks" an applicant's chances. Employers do not assign particular weights to any of the elements, nor do they use any single source of information to screen out applicants.

BENEFITS

By making use of student records, employers gain a more qualified workforce. Educators better understand the skills and knowledge their students need upon graduation. Students know that school counts.

Employers report:

- A lower failure rate for entry-level workers.
- Entry-level workers require less skill-remediation training.

Schools say:

- Greater numbers of high school students enroll in higher-level math and science classes.

In addition to these benefits, one of the greatest benefits is that the record becomes a catalyst for starting a dialogue between educators and employers on finding ways to connect success in school and success in the workplace.

KEEP IN MIND

- **Equal Consideration:** No one factor in the process is designated as a make-or-break item. Employers need to be careful not to use any single piece of the process as a screen. This strategy has not been challenged in court. As in all hiring procedures, your organization should consult legal counsel.

COMPANIES IN ACTION

UNUM Corporation

UNUM is a publicly-held disability and special risk insurance holding company based in Portland, Maine, with about 6,700 employees worldwide. Since Oct. 1, 1997, UNUM has been asking job applicants for "proof of performance in high school." The company's aim: to reinforce the message that all students, not just those bound for college, need to work hard and get good grades.

UNUM CEO James Orr took the first step in sending that message when he announced the change in policy at a Chamber of Commerce breakfast. To make sure applicants are aware of the requirement, UNUM's employment information telephone directory instructs callers to include high school records when applying for work with the company, and new signs at personnel offices alert walk-in applicants to the requirement. In addition, UNUM's business units in the United States have added this wording to job application forms and notices for entry-level positions:

> If you have attended or graduated from high school within the last three years, you need to provide proof of performance in high school in the following areas in order for your application to be considered:
>
> - A listing of completed courses with corresponding grades and overall grade point average.
> - A listing of extra-curricular activities, honors and awards.

UNUM is using academic records along with other relevant information, such as post-secondary education, work experience, references, etc., as topics for discussion during interviews. The company will not disqualify job applicants based on high school performance alone.

This strategy lets UNUM use school records in its hiring process without creating additional work for human resource personnel or expense for applicants. The company has not linked specific coursework or academic achievements to workplace performance. However, as schools adapt their curriculum to reflect higher academic standards, such as those recently adopted in Maine, the company hopes other employers — as well as students — will pay more attention to school records.

For more information, please contact John Carroll, UNUM Foundation, (207) 770-4442.

Eastman Chemical Company

Since 1989, Eastman Chemical Company, which employs 12,000 workers in Kingsport, Tennessee, has been requiring school records as one of many pieces of information it collects about job applicants.

The job applicant is responsible for providing Eastman interviewers with a high school transcript or a college transcript. The company is looking for evidence that entry-level candidates satisfactorily completed certain courses, because a job analysis revealed that specific courses in math, science and English teach skills that many Eastman employees use.

And to make sure Eastman's decision makers are using school records as effectively as possible, local high school guidance counselors teach them how to interpret the information contained in transcripts.

Eastman has seen real benefits from using student records over a relatively long period of time. The failure rate of its entry-level employees has hit an industry low, and new employees moving through apprenticeship programs need less remedial training. In addition, local high schools are seeing dramatic enrollment increases in higher-level math and science courses.

For more information, please contact Paul Montgomery, Eastman Chemical Corporation, (423) 229-1413.

SMART Grad

Preparing students for the workplace, connecting them to job opportunities and providing employers with valuable information about applicants — these are the aims of the Las Vegas Chamber of Commerce's *SMART Grad* program, which currently has 50 business partners and 25 participating schools. Chamber members work with schools to train students in job skills, interview techniques and resume writing. Employers come into classrooms to talk about the workplace and they give students opportunities to experience the world of work firsthand through job shadowing.

Participating students help create a laminated resume-type document that lists personal and job-related information — including an essay; skills, training and educational experience; membership in extracurricular activities, leadership awards and honors; community service and work experience; and teachers' ratings on attributes such as attitude, attendance, dependability, initiative, judgment and quality of work. No grades, GPA or course listings are on the card unless the student chooses to include them. *SMART Grads* also gain access to a job bank, and Chamber members have agreed to hire *SMART Grad* program graduates over other applicants if their qualifications are equal.

Jerry Maske, service manager at Albert and James Photography says: "*SMART Grad* is a great way for me to find both a pool of applicants along with clues as to how these kids will perform at work." During interviews, Maske talks to applicants about their work with *SMART Grad*. "The fact that they participated in the program tells you something about them."

For more information, please contact Cindy Nevin, *SMART GRAD* program, Las Vegas Chamber of Commerce, (702) 735-7586.

STRATEGY C: CONNECT TO THE JOB

Employers analyze the particular job they need to fill, and identify the specific knowledge, skills and abilities needed to successfully perform that job. Then they use the information on school records to help determine if candidates possess these particular skills.

WHAT IT MEANS

This strategy requires a thorough review of both the job for which a school record is being used to make hiring decisions, and the content of the school records themselves. The process of making a legitimate and defensible connection between jobs to be filled and the criteria for filling them is called "validation" (also known as "job relatedness").

If your organization wishes to validate the use of school records in hiring, it must:

1) Analyze the job(s) for which school records will be used in making hiring decisions.
2) Identify the knowledge, skills and abilities that are important (some courts say "crucial" or "significant") to job performance, based on the job analysis.
3) Identify specific selection criteria (such as particular school courses, grades, etc.) that demonstrate that candidates possess the knowledge, skills and abilities identified as important in the job analysis.
4) Determine whether the selection criteria is effective — i.e., whether it successfully predicts or significantly correlates with the knowledge, skills and abilities needed to perform the job.

BENEFITS

Taking a more detailed approach to using school records can provide employers with valuable information, both about their operations and potential job candidates.

- Identify skills required to successfully do the job. This information can be used to determine the information on high school records that is relevant to the job. This information can be used in numerous other human resource functions, such as writing job descriptions, assessing training needs, designing jobs, determining compensation, etc.
- Create a screening tool that will actually help to recruit employees who are better equipped for your workplace. Numerous studies show that over time, this will lead to increased productivity, quality, and decreased training costs. Because this tool relies on job-relevant criteria, this is also the most "fair" to the applicant.
- Create a legally defensible hiring tool if your company is challenged.

KEEP IN MIND

- **Disparate Impact:** Using school records to screen for job-related knowledge, skills and abilities is permissible if the practice has no disparate impact OR the information from school records has been

validated in accordance with the law, and using this information for hiring is consistent with business necessity.

For example, an employer might require all applicants for a particular job to provide school records showing successful completion of a basic course in geometry. If the use of this course requirement were challenged and shown to screen out a disproportionate number of persons protected by federal anti-discrimination laws, the employer then would have to show the validity of requiring applicants for that job to have passed geometry. To do this, the employer would have to analyze the job in question, identify the critical knowledge, skills and abilities needed to perform the job, and demonstrate that successful completion of a geometry course can predict whether an applicant possesses the needed job knowledge, skills and abilities.

- **Subjective Criteria:** Some job analyses reveal that character traits like "motivation" and "leadership ability" are important to job performance. Because such traits are difficult to define, measure and evaluate, the process of determining whether an applicant possesses them is often subject to personal opinion. It is legal to make inferences about job-related characteristics and traits from the information in school records. However, your organization still must show the business necessity for seeking the subjective characteristic or trait, OR you must show a business need for evaluating applicants subjectively. Finally, the subjective criteria must be "validated" by demonstrating that they actually do identify, measure or predict the desired attribute.

- **Specific Advice:** Employers that wish to validate specific uses of school records in hiring should consult appropriate testing and measurement professionals such as industrial/organizational psychologists, as well as legal counsel, for specific advice.

COMPANIES IN ACTION

IBM

As of July 1997, IBM requires applicants for entry-level manufacturing positions who have taken high school courses within the past five years to complete a Manufacturing Applicant Data form. IBM developed this form to evaluate applicants' academic achievements, previous job experiences and job-related skills. Competitive candidates are asked to continue with the selection process, and if they are offered a job, IBM asks them to provide a high school transcript as verification of the course information they provided on the data form.

Step 1: IBM analyzed the specific skills required for manufacturing jobs. IBM conducted a nationwide analysis of IBM entry-level manufacturing jobs. Tours of major production lines and interviews with IBM manufacturing managers and employees identified groups of tasks, as well as the skills and abilities required to do the tasks. These skills and abilities include logical reasoning and problem solving, the ability to follow directions and procedures, communication skills, numerical comprehension, flexibility and willingness to cooperate, and teamwork skills.

Step 2: IBM developed an experimental tool. This tool included many possible questions about an applicant's educational background and prior job experiences that might reveal whether an applicant possessed the relevant skills. A large group of manufacturing employees volunteered to answer the questions. Simultaneously, their managers rated the employees' job performance using a special research performance rating form. The goal of this phase was to identify which questions would be evaluated in Step 3 by subject matter experts (SMEs).

Step 3: IBM conducted a "validation" study. Panels of managers participated in validation meetings at each of IBM's manufacturing locations. SMEs reviewed the questions in Step 2 to determine which measured the skills, abilities or competencies that were important to successful performance in the jobs they manage. In addition, managers indicated how they thought their best and worst employees would respond to each question. This information was used to determine which questions should be included in the final form and how it is scored.

"The planning and research we invested in enacting our new student records policy provided us with a better understanding of the calibre of skill and experience we need to successfully compete in the marketplace," said Robin Willner, IBM's Director of Corporate Social Policy and Programs. "We were overwhelmed by the positive responses we received from educators, parents, and the press. It is up to us to make students understand the direct relationship between their work in high school and their future opportunities."

For more information, please contact John Pass, IBM Human Resources, (914) 332-2786.

BellSouth Corporation

In 1996, BellSouth, which has a total of more than 80,000 employees, hired more than 6,000 new workers, mostly for technical and consumer service positions. The wave of new hires revealed a skills gap: 50 percent of applicants failed BellSouth's first tier selection test.

ABOUT THE *HSTW* ASSESSMENT AND THE SREB CERTIFICATE OF EDUCATION ACHIEVEMENT

The *High Schools That Work (HSTW)* assessment is a set of exams and student surveys that measure performance in core subjects and connect performance levels with school and classroom practices. The assessment uses items from the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP). Unlike many standardized tests, the *HSTW* assessment uses open-ended items for which students must construct their responses.

SREB and the Educational Testing Service provide a Certificate of Educational Achievement to each student who has met SREB recommended curriculum and performed successfully on the *HSTW* assessment. The certificate documents for employers and post-secondary institutions that recipients have completed an upgraded academic core, have achieved a certain level on NAEP and have a career major and have met SREB performance goals on the reading, mathematics and science exams.

To qualify for the Certificate of Educational Achievement, a student must meet three of the following standards:

- Complete four full-year courses in college preparatory level English;
- Complete three or more full-year courses in math, including two credits equal to Algebra I, geometry or higher-level courses;
- Complete three or more full-year courses in science, including two credits in chemistry, applied physics or a lab-based biology course; and
- Complete four credits that are above the core courses in a vocational major

Then the company discovered that applicants who held the Southern Regional Education Board's (SREB) Certificate of Educational Achievement did significantly better on the tests. The SREB Certificate attests that students from the *"High Schools That Work" (HSTW)* program have taken certain courses and achieved at an outstanding level in key academic areas in high school.

To establish that SREB Certificate holders do indeed perform better on its assessments, BellSouth tested certificate holders in five locations. Out of the SREB Certificate holders that BellSouth tested, 97 percent passed the first tier selection test with a 50% higher score than non certificate holders. BellSouth uses the *High Schools That Work* database, indexed by zip codes, to identify well-qualified students in locations where there are job openings. The database helps human resource personnel determine which areas may have good pools of qualified applicants and allows them to target their recruitment activities. BellSouth now permits applicants who hold the SREB Certificate to bypass the first level of pre-employment testing.

For more information, please contact Lee Doyle, BellSouth Corporation, (404) 249-2103, or call John Varner at the Southern Regional Education Board, (404) 875-9211.

FAX-BACK FORM

MAKING ACADEMICS COUNT

Name of Organization: _____

Address: _____

_____

_____

Contact Person: _____

Phone: _____ E-mail: _____

❒ **Yes, my company would like more information on ways to incorporate student records into our hiring practices. Please send me the following:**

- ❒ Extra copies of the brochure (which is found in the front pocket of this document) **10¢ per copy**
- ❒ *Transcripts Update*, the bimonthly newsletter **Add me to the mailing list**
- ❒ Other

_____

_____

❒ **My company is going to begin to use student records as part of our regular hiring process. Add my company to the Employer Honor Roll.**

❒ **Feature my company on the *Making Academics Count* web site. Attached is a copy of our corporate policy on student records that will be added to the web site to share with other companies.**

In the space below, please feel free to comment on the usefulness of this document as you work to implement a student records policy.

Please fax this form to (202) 289-2908

For additional information, please contact Elizabeth Pauley at the National Alliance of Business, (202) 289-2864 (e-mail: pauleye@nab.com).

MAKING ACADEMICS COUNT

Employers Motivating Students To Work Hard In School

WHAT IS THE MAKING ACADEMICS COUNT CAMPAIGN?

Making Academics Count is one part of the National Alliance of Business, The Business Roundtable and the U.S. Chamber of Commerce's *Common Agenda for Improving American Education*. The three organizations are working together to change company practices in order to increase student achievement. Every employer can send a clear message to students, "yes, school counts," by asking for school records in the hiring process.

> BUSINESS MUST GO BEYOND ADOPT A SCHOOL PROGRAMS. WE HAVE TO JOIN WITH SCHOOLS AND SEND A CLEAR MESSAGE TO TEENAGERS AND THEIR PARENTS: ACADEMIC WORK IN HIGH SCHOOL MATTERS.
>
> *Louis V. Gerstner, Jr. Chairman and CEO IBM Corporation*

In summer 1997, the Business Coalition for Education Reform (BCER; a partnership between NAB, BRT, the U.S. Chamber and nine other business groups) kicked off a two-year nationwide effort to reinforce the connection between school performance and workplace success. The goal: to have at least 10,000 companies of all sizes asking for school records and other profiles of academic performance as part of their hiring practices. NAB is providing tools and assistance to business leaders, educators and other members of the community to help them in this effort.

CAMPAIGN RESOURCES

Making Academics Count brochure

This easy-to-read brochure illustrates the importance of using transcripts in the hiring process and provides tips for getting started.

Making Academics Count Web Site

(www.bcer.org) This site features companies and communities across the country that use school records in the hiring process; answers frequently asked questions; displays media coverage and journal articles; lists the growing "Honor Roll" of companies that ask for school records; and describes other efforts that support the use of school records in hiring.

Hiring Smart: An Employer's Guide to Using School Records

This guide provides specific strategies and tips for companies to use school records in the hiring process.

Transcript Update

A bi-monthly newsletter that describes new resources and tools, and highlights policies and programs for using school records in the hiring process.

Speaker's Bureau/Technical Assistance

NAB puts communities and companies in touch with business and education leaders who have integrated school records into hiring practices and who can share lessons learned.

An Employer's Guide to Using School Records in Hiring Decisions

This legal brief, researched and written by the Equal Employment Advisory Council (EEAC), is the most comprehensive review of case law concerning the use of student records in hiring.

Guidelines for Developing Meaningful School Records

A task force comprised of representatives of higher education, business and training schools are identifying the skills and knowledge that customers of secondary education are seeking. From this, the task force is creating guidelines for developing school records which are useful and meaningful to prospective employers. These guidelines will inform community efforts to incorporate school records in hiring.

> THE TRANSCRIPT IS THE BEST TOOL YET FOR A SMALL BUSINESS. IT IS A COST FREE AND SIMPLE WAY TO OBTAIN VALUABLE INFORMATION ABOUT JOB APPLICANTS.
>
> *Vernalee Frey*
> *President & Owner*
> *Claymont Servistar Hardware & Supply*

Communities School Records Project

Businesses and schools in six communities are working together to incorporate school records into local employers' hiring processes. These communities will serve as case study sites throughout the two years of the *Making Academics Count* campaign. Each is receiving tailored technical assistance and networking support through a partnership between the American Association of School Administrators, the American Federation of Teachers, the American School Counselor Association, the National Education Association, the National Association of Elementary School Principals, the National Association of Secondary School Principals, the National School Boards Association and the National Alliance of Business. At the end of the study, a final report will document each community's experiences.

Analysis of Campaign Progress/Impact

At the end of the two-year campaign to encourage employers to ask for school records in hiring, NAB will publish an analysis that will detail progress, describe lessons learned and measure the campaign's impact on hiring practices and student performance.

Campaign Supporters

Making Academics Count is targeted at employers — but NAB is collaborating with educators and community leaders to ensure that students, parents, schools and the public are aware of the crucial link between school performance and work place success.

American Association of School Administrators
American Business Conference
American Federation of Teachers
American School Counselor Association
Business Coalition for Education Reform
Business-Higher Education Forum
The Business Roundtable
Committee for Economic Development
The Conference Board
The Council of Growing Companies
Council on Competitiveness
National Alliance of Business
National Association of Elementary School Principals
National Association of Manufacturers
National Association of Partners in Education
National Association of Secondary School Principals
National Association of Women Business Owners
National Education Association
National School Boards Association
National School Supply & Equipment Association
U.S. Chamber of Commerce
U.S. Hispanic Chamber of Commerce
Utilities Business Education Coalition

National School Records Campaign Sponsors

BellSouth Corporation
The Business Roundtable
Entergy Corporation
IBM Corporation
Lockheed Martin Corporation
National Alliance of Business
State Farm Insurance Companies

MAKING ACADEMICS COUNT

Making Academics Count
c/o National Alliance of Business
1201 New York Avenue, NW Suite 700
Washington, DC 20005
800-787-2848 www.bcer.org

*FOR MORE INFORMATION about the **Making Academics Count** campaign and how to begin asking for school records when hiring, please contact the National Alliance of Business' Elizabeth Pauley (202/289-2864 or email pauleye@nab.com) or Aimee Rogstad Guidera (202/289-2901).*

GLOSSARY

Disparate impact: Discrimination against a protected group as a by-product of some seemingly neutral employment practice or criterion. Proving disparate impact requires more than simple evidence of a disparity in the composition of an organization's workforce. The plaintiff "must offer statistical evidence of a kind and degree sufficient to show that the practice in question had caused the exclusion of applicants for jobs or promotions because of their membership in a protected group." *Watson v. Fort Worth Bank & Trust*, 487 U.S. 977, 995 (1988).

Disparate treatment: Treating an individual differently because of his or her race, gender, national origin, religion, age or disability rather than other criteria.

Validation (or "job-related standards"): The way an employer tests whether a selection criterion is job-related, i.e., the criterion helps the employer determine whether a job applicant possesses the knowledge, skills or abilities to successfully perform a job.

Business necessity: An employer's reasons why a particular criteria must be used. "Business necessity inquires whether the job criteria arise out of a manifest business need and the job-related standards inquires whether there is a correlation between the criteria used and successful job performance." *Graham v. Scott Paper Co.*, 870 F. Supp. 389, 400 (D. Me. 1994), *aff'd without op.*, 60 F.3d 809 (1st Cir. 1995).

Title VII: Part of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, Title VII makes it unlawful to "fail or refuse to hire" or "otherwise to discriminate against any individual" because of such individual's race, color, religion, sex or national origin. The Americans with Disabilities Act, 42 U.S. C. 12101, *et seq.* (12112), and the Age Discrimination in Employment Act, 29 U.S.C. 621, *et seq.* (623), provide similar protections on the basis of disability and age, respectively.

***Griggs v. Duke Power Co.*, 401 U.S. 424 (1971):** Prior to 1965, Duke Power restricted black employees to positions within its Labor department. That year, at the same time Title VII took effect, Duke Power adopted a high school diploma requirement for transfer within the company. In addition, to qualify for initial placement in any department other than labor, applicants also had to pass two general aptitude tests. In a landmark Supreme Court ruling, both these practices were found to have a disparate impact on the employment opportunities of black workers, although the company financed some high school training costs to help employees meet the degree requirement. The *Griggs* Court recognized Duke Power's good faith in trying to help its employees become better educated, but noted that "Congress directed the thrust of the [Title VII] to the *consequences* of employment practices, not simply the motivation." *Griggs*, 401 U.S. at 432. The *Griggs* theory of disparate impact is based on the premise that "artificial, arbitrary and unnecessary barriers to employment ...[that] operate insidiously to discriminate on the basis of racial or other impermissible classification" violate Title VII. 401 U.S. at 431.

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